DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 329 745 CE 057 277

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TITLE Determining the Use of Self-Directed Learning among Adult Male Students at Lake Correctional Institution.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 27p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Basic Education; Adult Education; *Cognitive Style; *Correctional Education; *Independent Study; Inservice Teacher Education; Males; Measures (Individuals); *Prisoners
IDENTIFIERS *Self Directed Learning Readiness Scale

ABSTRACT

Fifty adult male inmates at Lake Correctional Institutional (Florida) were administered Guglielmino's Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale to determine their capability of self-directed or independent learning. The mean score on the scale was 135.1 and the standard deviation was 17.235. The results were compared to Guglielmino's national norm. The population mean from the national norm was 129 with a standard deviation of 18.056. A one-tailed t-test was conducted between the mean score at Lake Correctional Institution and the mean from the national norm. It was found that adult male correctional education students at Lake Correctional Institution possess the ability to be self-directed learners when compared to the 191 people in the national norm who were not correctional education students. It was also found that the propensity for self-directed learning was higher among the 50 correctional educational males than the people in the national norm. It was recommended that learning activities for adult mandatory and regular students be designed to use the principles of self-directed learning and that a follow-up study using a larger sample be conducted for correctional education. The use of the principles of self-directed learning was recommended for future inservice training of teachers in correctional education. (20 references) (NLA)

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ED329745

DETERMINING THE USE OF SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING AMONG ADULT MALE STUDENTS AT LAKE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION

BY

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ABSTRACT

Fifty adult male inmates at Lake Correctional Institution were administered the ABE Edition of Guglielmino's Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale to determine their capability of self-directed learning. The mean score on the scale was 135.1 and the standard deviation was 17.235. The results were compared to Guglielmino's national norm. The population mean from the national norm was 129 with a standard deviation of 18.056.

A one-tailed t-test was conducted between the mean score at Lake Correctional Institution and the mean from the national norm. The calculated t-value of 2.39 which was realized was greater than the critical t-value of 2.00 at ninety-five percent significance level with forty-nine degrees of freedom. The calculated t-value was not significant.

The null hypothesis of no difference between the two means was not rejected. It was found that adult male correctional education students at Lake Correctional Institution possess the ability to be self-directed learners when compared to the 191 people in the national norm who were not correctional education students. It was also found that the propensity for self-directed learning was higher

among the fifty correctional educational males than the people in the national norm.

It was recommended that learning activities for adult mandatory and regular students be designed to use the principles of self-directed learning and that a follow-up study using a larger sample be conducted for correctional education. The use of the principles of self-directed learning was recommended for future in-service training of teachers in correctional education.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The curriculum of the education department at Lake Correctional Institution is designed for individualized instruction. Some students have shown ambivalence and dislike for this method of instruction. Another group of students has indicated a preference to learn only specific and meaningful materials; this group is not concerned about a diploma or mastery of the prescribed competencies. The number of dissatisfied students has grown as evidenced by their requests and explanations for re-assignments.

There is an impending problem. By January 1989, all incoming inmates who read below the 9.0 grade level on the Test of Adult Basic Education and have more than two years of prison time but less than life are required to enroll in school for 150 hours (Florida Statutes 242.68,1987). The education departments of each institution are directed to enforce this mandate. To fulfill the 150 hours could require additional teachers or a method by which the present number of teachers can teach this new group of students without disrupting the teachers' work load. This method of using the present number of teachers to teach the mandatory students seems probable as well as cost effective.

The problem was how to determine the method of instruction the teachers would use. If teachers know what their students want to learn or how they wish to approach

the learning activity, teaching and learning may be easier and more effective. The research problem was to determine whether students in correctional education at Lake Correctional Institution have the ability to be self-directed learners.

Statement Of The Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if adult male correctional education students at Lake Correctional Institution can use self-directed learning.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:
(1) Are correctional adult male students at Lake Correctional Institution capable of assuming self-directed learning?
(2) To what degree are correctional adult males at Lake Correctional Institution similar to traditional adult learners in terms of being self-directed learners?

Hypotheses

As a research hypothesis, adult male correctional education students at Lake Correctional Institution will not show the use of self-directed learning as a learning style when compared with adults in a national norm. The null hypothesis of no difference was that the mean score of adult

male correctional education students at Lake Correctional Institution on the Guglielmino's Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale would not differ significantly from the mean score reported from the national norm on Guglielmino's Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale. As an alternate hypothesis, the mean score of adult male correctional education students at Lake Correctional Institution will differ from the mean score as reported for the national norm by Guglielmino and Associates.

Definition Of Terms

The phrases, self-directed learning, adult male correctional education students, the use of self-directed learning, and learning style were used in this study to specifically mean the following:

Self-directed learning: This phase as used in this study will mean an approach to learning in which the learner is free to select the contents and resources in pursuit of a learning activity. In this case, the selection of contents and resources were limited to the environment of the prison.

Adult male correctional education students: This phrase will be used in this study to refer to all male inmates who participated in the study and who were in residence at Lake Correctional Institution.

The use of self-directed learning: The phrase is used in this study to measure the ability of students to engage in self-directed learning. As such, the use of self-directed learning is determined by the mean score on the Guglielmino's Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale above or equal to the national norm.

Learning style: This term is used in this study to mean any method or approach an individual used to achieve learning.

Limitations

This study is limited in terms of the subjects and the instrument. Participation in the study was voluntary. The subjects were adult males who are voluntarily enrolled or required to enroll in school. The instrument is limited in terms of reliability and validity that are often associated with such instruments. The results of this study should not be taken to mean that all adult male correctional education students at Lake Correctional Institution are self-directed learners or not self-directed learners.

Assumptions

It was assumed during the course of this study that the scores on Guglielmino's Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale would be valid indicators of self-directed learning. It was also assumed that the instrument was administered as

correctly as recommended by the authors. The participants were assumed to have participated in good faith.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditional adult education is nearly always designed for self-directed learning because students in traditional adult education are assumed to engage in the process for specific purposes. Adults enrolled in nontraditional education are sometimes assumed to also use self-directed learning. However, in correctional education there is no empirical evidence of the use of self-directed learning among the inmates.

Loesch and Foley (1988) have found that adults who are engaged in nontraditional education tend to prefer self-directed learning. The authors did not mention correctional adult education as a nontraditional education. Their findings however showed that nontraditional students are independent and self-directed.

It would seem that correctional education is probably a different kind of nontraditional adult education. However according to Platt (1988), correctional institutions tend to promote dependency among the inmates. In this regard, the inmates are not equipped with the skills that will enable them to become responsible and probably, self-directed learners.

The apparent difference in self-directed learning among traditional and nontraditional or correctional and noncorrectional adult education students is probably not the only difference among adult learners. Conti (1985) has shown that adult General Educational Development (GED) students are more dependent on teacher-centered methods of learning than are students of English as a Second Language. Long and Agyekum (1983) have tried to explain the characteristic differences among adults toward self-directed learning.

When Mourand and Torrance (1978) determined the construct validity of Guglielmino's Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale using Principle Component Analysis for Teacher Rating Scale (TRS) and the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS) factor scores, it was found that the SDLRS was highly correlated with TRS. The authors again used the Cronback Alpha Procedure to determine the internal consistency of the factors on SDLRS. They were able to abstract eight factors as Guglielmino did when she performed the same analysis.

The TRS is a nine-item questionnaire. The data of the 569 subjects on the TRS provided one factor with internal consistency of 0.96. The factors on the TRS measured abilities, skills, and motivation as characteristics for self-directed learning. The SDLRS produced eight factors also based on abilities, skills, and motivation for self-

directed learning. When the total TRS score was correlated with the SDLRS factors and total score, the range was 0.01 to 0.25. The authors reported that all correlations, except for one on the SDLRS and the TRS were significant at the 0.001 level.

In another validation study by Long and Agyekum (1983) involving 136 students, the authors used the SDLRS, Agreement Response Scale (ARS), and Rokeach's Dogmatism Scale. The ARS measures whether responses are based on beliefs, values, knowledge, or personality traits. The higher the ARS score, the more dependent an individual is in thinking and learning. The SDLRS based self-directed learning on TRS of six factors. TRS measures what teachers think of their students in terms of being self-directed learners. Rokeach's Dogmatism Scale measures the degree of openness. The higher the score, the less open and less self-directed the individual. There was no relationship between TRS and SDLRS.

Cook (1985) has shown that when SDLRS and peer evaluation were used as alternate measures of self-directed learning there was a significant correlation between peer evaluation and SDLRS. Long and Agyekum (1983) found no relationship between TRS and SDLRS.

Van Merrienboer and Jelsma (1988) have also tried to link school achievement to the cognitive or learning styles and conditions of traditional adult education. To them, the

more impulsive students are in their responses, the lower their achievement.

Payne (1988) has shown that achievement can be optimized if the learning preferences of students were considered and matched against the teaching preferences of the instructor. Along this line, Delisle (1988) has shown that knowing how to teach influences the learning styles of students. This argument may be further stretched to include the learning situations and conditions. As Collins (1988) showed, the situation in prison contradicts the power structure of the prison and achievement of the students.

According to Merriam (1988), learning styles are measures of people's preferred mode of learning. Smith (1982) has shown that everybody has a learning style. Oddi (1987) has however defined self-directed learning as a psychological need and not a learning activity. It is not clear if a preferred mode of learning is latent or actually measurable.

The tests and other instruments that are used in prison settings usually measure intellectual potential, knowledge, and achievement. These tests are critical and biased because they tend to focus on disabilities and not abilities of the inmates (Waksman and Weber,1983). This was probably why Field (1989) questioned the validity of Guglielmino's Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale. It was maintained

that the instrument measures only the affective domain of learning.

It is common knowledge among adult educators that their clientele uses self-directed learning as a learning style. In this regard, self-directed learning is seen as a natural disposition of adults (Brookfield,1986). Brookfield (1984) however argued that the sample of adults used in self-directed learning studies has been biased because only adults from the middle class are used. Talbert (1987) has also argued that to assume that all adults use self-directed learning as a learning style is a fallacy.

Caffarella and Caffarella (1984) have studied the impact of learning contract on self-directed learning. They maintained that learning contract does not promote self-directed learning as is usually believed. Guglielmino (1989) explained that there is no difference between adults in terms of self-directed learning as a learning style.

PROCEDURES

Procedures For Collection Of Data

The data that were collected consisted of mean scores on Guglielmino's Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale from adult male correctional education students and from the national norm. The instrument was obtained from Guglielmino and Associates.

A random sample of fifty adult male correctional education students from the 189 students in the education department was selected for the study. The Department of Corrections identification numbers of the 189 students were recorded on small pieces of paper. The 189 numbers were placed in a paper bag and shaken. For each shake, a number was pulled from the bag and the number was matched against the name of a student. This exercise of sampling without replacement was repeated until fifty random participants were selected. All students in the education department were aware of the study and had volunteered to participate. Fifty students were used because of the number of the instruments that was available.

Procedures For Treatment Of Data

The mean score of adult male correctional education students was obtained. The mean score from the national norm was also obtained. A one-tailed t-test was conducted where $\bar{X}$ represented the mean score of adult male correctional education students and μ represented the mean score as reported from the national norming process. The null hypothesis of no difference was tested at ninety-five percent significance level.

RESULTS

There were fifty adult male correctional education students who took the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale. The mean score of these students was 135.1 and the standard deviation was 17.235. The national norm reported a population mean of 129 and a standard deviation of 18.056. As shown in Table 1, the calculated t-value was 2.39 for forty-nine degrees of freedom.

Table 1

The means, standard deviations, number of people, and calculated t-value

	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	t-value
Correctional male adults	50	135.1	17.235	2.39
National norm	191	129	18.056	

Analysis Of Data

For the purpose of this study, it was hypothesized that there would be no significant difference between the mean score of adult male correctional education students and the

mean score reported from the national norm. The mean score of adult male correctional education students was 135.1, while the mean score reported from the national norm was 129.

The calculated t-value, 2.39 was not significantly higher than the critical value of t (2.00) for a one-tailed t-test. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no difference between the two means was not rejected. At the ninety-five percent significant level for forty-nine degrees of freedom, the critical value of t is 2.00. The alternate hypothesis was that the mean score for adult male correctional education students would be significantly higher than the mean score reported by Guglielmino and Associates. This hypothesis was not supported.

DISCUSSION

The results show that adult male correctional education students are capable of assuming self-directed learning when compared with the data from the national norm. The results also show that when the mean score for adult male correctional education students was compared with the mean from the national norm, not only were adult male correctional education students capable of self-directed learning, their performance was slightly higher than the national norm.

Smith (1982) has shown that adults use self-directed learning, collaborative learning, and learning through instruction as three modes of learning. Brookfield (1984) agreed that most adults do use self-directed learning as a learning style. He however argued that most adults are not represented in the samples that claim self-directed learning as a propensity for adults. It was maintained that most research samples use adults from the middle class. From the results of the present study it is evident that the argument that studies on self-directed learning rely on samples from the middle class may be questioned. Adult male correctional education students in this study do not represent the adults referred to as middle class by Brookfield (1984).

According to Guglielmino (1989), there is no significant difference between adults in their tendencies to be self-directed learners. Attempts to find other instruments or studies on self-directed learning among adult correctional education students have proven futile. Field (1989) has shown that Guglielmino's Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale is one of the few instruments available. However, the instrument is flawed in construction because it measures the affective aspects of learning and not a readiness to learn.

When Loesch and Foley (1988) investigated self-directed learning among adult nontraditional education students, they found that nontraditional adult students were independent

and self-directed learners. Although their findings did not refer to correctional adult education, the results of the present study overwhelmingly endorse the Loesch and Foley's findings. The results as shown in Table 1, indicate that adult male correctional education students are in fact, more self-directed when compared with those in the national norm.

Caffarella and Caffarella (1984) have attempted to determine self-directed learning among graduate students who use learning contracts. They found that learning contracts do not help to develop self-directed learning, but learning contracts do develop the competencies for being self-directed learners. Long and Agyekum (1983) also found that there was no significant difference between Teacher Response Ration and Self-Directed Learning Readiness.

Conti (1984) has shown that adult General Educational Development students were not as self-directed in their learning as were adult students of English as a Second Language. Students who are self-directed learners assume responsibilities for their learning situations.

The sample of adult male correctional education students in this study comprised of Adult Basic Education, mandatory education, General Educational Development, and vocational education. As shown in Table 1, these adult male correctional education students showed a higher degree for self-directed learning than those in the national norm.

However, Guglielmino (1989) has explained that there is no difference between adults in terms self-directedness.

The results of this study do not declaratively state adult male correctional education students are self-directed learners. The results however show that the present sample of adult male correctional education students is indicative of what may be seen in a larger population.

Implications

It is not clear whether the prison environment contributed to the results of this study. What is clear is that at Lake Correctional Institution, the adult males in the sample were more self-directed learners when compared with the national norm. The curriculum of the education department may have to be redesigned and made responsive to this group of learners.

Delisle (1988) has shown that knowing how to teach makes an impact on the learners and does influence their learning styles. It is not clear if the individualized curriculum at the institution or the teaching styles of the teachers played a role in the findings. It can however be inferred that self-directed may be a propensity of more adult male correctional education students. Therefore, learning situations that use the principles of self-directed learning could help to improve the learning environments at Lake Correctional Institution.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that an institutionalized study be conducted to determine self-directed learning among adult inmates. While the assertion of Platt (1988) that prison environments may contradict self-directed learning is refuted by the results of this study, the results are by no means endorsement of the fact that all adult male correctional education students or all correctional education students are self-directed learners.

Oddi (1987) has suggested that self-directed learning is a psychological need and not a learning activity. It is therefore recommended that a follow-up study using a larger sample be conducted to determine the prevalence of the use of self-directed learning among correctional education students.

Potential For Improvement And Positive Change

One of the reasons for conducting this study was to obtain evidence of self-directed learning among adult male correctional education students who are selected for mandatory education. Thus far, self-directed learning has been ascertained among the sample for this study. The results of this study could be used to design learning

activities based on the principles of self-directed learning. This would mean that teachers who are responsible for mandatory education students should be trained in the methods and principles of self-directed learning.

The use of the principles and methods of self-directed learning may prove to be cost effective because additional teachers may not have to be hired. Self-directed learning may also prove useful because the teachers will be cognizant of the learning needs and styles of their students.

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APPENDIX

Name _____ Age _____

Sex _____ Race _____ Date of Birth _____

Learning Cente · _____ Today's Date _____

LEARNING QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTRUCTIONS: These are some questions about how you like to learn best and how you feel about learning. Read each sentence and choose the one answer which is most true for you. Be sure to answer every question.

There are no wrong answers, so be sure to mark the answer which tells you how you feel. Usually the answer that comes to your mind first is the answer that is true for you.

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Use the following responses:

1. I never feel like this.
2. I feel like this less than half the time.
3. I feel like this half the time.
4. I usually feel like this.
5. I feel like this all the time.

Sample Item:
I like chocolate. (1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

ITEMS:

		RESPONSES				
		I never feel like this.	I feel like this less than half the time.	Half the time I feel this way.	I usually feel this way.	I feel like this all the time.
1.	I know what I want to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	When I see something that I don't understand, I stay away from it.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	If there is something I want to learn, I can find a way to learn it.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I love to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I believe that a big part of my education should be thinking about what kind of person I am and what kinds of things I want to do with my life.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I know where to go to get information when I need it.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I can learn things by myself better than most people my age.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	If there is something I have decided to learn, I can find time for it, no matter how busy I am.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Understanding what I read is a problem for me.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I knowwhen I need to learn more about something.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I think books are boring.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I can think of many different ways to learn about something new.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I try to think about how the things I am learning will fit in with the plans I have for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I really enjoy looking for the answer to a hard question.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I have a lot of questions about things.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	I'll be glad when I'm finished learning.	1	2	3	4	5

Go on to next page

Use the following responses:

1. I never feel like this.
2. I feel like this less than half the time.
3. I feel like this half the time.
4. I usually feel like this.
5. I feel like this all the time.

ITEMS:	RESPONSES				
	I never feel like this.	I feel like this less than half the time.	Half the time I feel this way.	I usually feel this way.	I feel like this all the time.
17. I'm not as interested in learning as some other people seem to be.	1	2	3	4	5
18. When I decide to find out something, I do it.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I like to try new things, even if I'm not sure how they will turn out.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I'm good at thinking of new ways to do things.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I like to think about the future.	1	2	3	4	5
22. A hard problem doesn't stop me.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I can make myself do what I think I should.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I am really good at solving problems.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I become a leader in learning groups.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I like talking about ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I don't like learning things that are hard.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I really want to learn new things.	1	2	3	4	5
29. When I learn more, the world becomes more exciting.	1	2	3	4	5
30. It's really my job to learn—the school and the teachers can't do it for me.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I learn many new things on my own each year.	1	2	3	4	5
32. I am a good learner in the classroom and on my own.	1	2	3	4	5
33. People who keep learning are leaders, because they know what's happening.	1	2	3	4	5
34. I like to see if I can solve hard problems.	1	2	3	4	5

SAMPLE

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END

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